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In 344
Housekeepers' Chats

Monday, January 19, 1931

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Comfortable Kitchens" Information, including menus and recipes from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletin available: "Convenient Kitchens"

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Four days is a long time to get along without a single visit from a friendly neighbor like the one who lives next door to me. Even Uncle Ebenezer noticed her absence and commented on it this morning.

"It seems to me that you haven't been seeing much of your chief crony lately. What do you suppose has been happening in the house next door to keep her so busy?" he inquired.

I had to confess that I was entirely in the dark as to what was going on, but I was sure it was something interesting. Since Thursday I had only had brief glimpses of my neighbor as she hurried in and out of her kitchen door, but she had looked so business-like and preoccupied that I hadn't dared to intrude.

"Well," said Uncle Ebenezer, "if I were in your place, I would go over and find out what is afoot."

"Oh, I should never dare disturb her unless--"

Just in the middle of that sentence, who should pop in but my neighbor herself?

"Good morning, Aunt Sammy. How are you, Uncle Ebenezer? I came over to sit down in that kitchen chair of yours. I wanted to see what it felt like-- to try it out again before--"

I said, "I should think you would want to try it out. You haven't been over for four days, and of course you have forgotten what my kitchen chair is like. Probably you have also forgotten what my whole house and its occupants are like. Where have you been all this time, anyway?"

"It's a long story, Aunt Sammy, but a very nice one. It's about a project all my own that I've been working up. Some of these days I mean to tell you about it."

Without another word my neighbor crossed the room and seated herself in the easy chair near the west window. She considered a minute and then said, "I think one like this will do very well for a final touch. Comfort, that's it. Comfort is one of the best words in the English language."

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Good-bye, Aunt Sammy. Good bye, Uncle Ebenezer. Isn't this sunshine we're having pleasant?"

"You aren't leaving us again so soon?"

My neighbor nodded and started for the door.

"Unless you want me to perish of curiosity right here on my new linoleum floor," I announced, "you will stop a minute and tell me what you have been up to and explain this big business that is taking all your time."

My neighbor came back and sat down again in my chair.

"All right," she said. "If you are that interested, I'll start the story today and finish it tomorrow when I hope my project will be completed and I have more time.

"What project?"

"The project on comfortable kitchens which is being conducted by me. I've been hearing about convenient kitchens, efficient kitchens, model kitchens and well-planned kitchens for a long time. But nobody has ever suggested comfortable kitchens. That is what I've been needing all these years--a comfortable kitchen. So I decided to create one all my own which would help prevent tired backs, headaches, stooping shoulders, weary feet and that feeling of monotony and drudgery that many housewives have about kitchen jobs.

"First I sat down in a comfortable chair where I could think hard and asked myself just what made for comfort in any room. Good light came to my mind first. A well-lighted kitchen for real comfort. Isn't it far easier to do any job in an adequately lighted room than to have to strain one's eyes trying to clean the lettuce or read the cookbook?

"You told me long ago, Aunt Sammy, that my kitchen was not properly lighted but I never thought seriously of remedying it until recently. I considered the windows, as I sat in that chair. Three big windows ought to be enough to light a medium sized kitchen. Yet on dark days I have always had to use artificial light because not enough daylight came in through the windows. Do you know what the trouble was? Those heavy curtains of mine were shutting off half the light. So I decided to substitute curtains of some thin material like voile which lets the light through and is inexpensive and easily laundered. I've chosen a yellow shade because light coming through soft yellow gives the effect of sunlight even on dark days. Those grey walls of mine have been done over. Why do you suppose I ever let my husband apply that dreary color to my kitchen walls? I realize now that light colored walls reflect light, while dark dull ones absorb it.

"As for artificial lighting, that can add a lot of comfort too. Dim lights, glaring lights, poorly placed lights all cause discomfort. Think of the number of kitchens that have only one lonely electric bulb

dangling on a wire from the center of the ceiling! That means, of course, that no matter where a woman stands in the room, she is always in her own light. Whether she is at the sink washing potatoes, or at her table stirring up cookies, or at the stove scrambling eggs that dangling light is always just behind her so that there is a shadow on her work. There is no comfort for anyone working in her own shadow. White light generally diffused around the room prevents shadows. If there is a center light, its best position is up at the ceiling. The best arrangement, I believe, is when lights are directed on the three working units-- the stove, the table, and the sink.

Then there is this matter of glare. Any glare hurts the eyes and is uncomfortable. Shiny walls sometimes create too much of a glare, so I have chosen a dull finish for mine. Unprotected light bulbs are also trying. The source of light can be concealed by using shades, opaque bulbs or indirect lighting."

"I'll tell you more tomorrow, Aunt Sammy, if you really want to hear. I could talk for a long time on comfortable equipment and comfortable working heights and so forth, but I really must be getting back to put on the last coat of paint."

It's time for the menu, anyway. We'll have veal cutlets for meat--veal cutlets rolled in flour this time instead of bread crumbs. You'll find the recipe for them on page 32 of Aunt Sammy's Radio Recipes. Peas are always delicious with veal, so let's have fresh or canned peas buttered, and for the second vegetable, creamed cauliflower. This meal does not require potatoes, but if they are a habit with your family, parsley potatoes will go very nicely with the cutlets, peas and cauliflower. For a fresh winter salad, there is grapefruit and lettuce salad with French dressing. As for dessert, how about some of that luscious devil's food cake described in the green booklet on page 70?

Once more our menu today is: Veal cutlets; Buttered peas; Creamed cauliflower; Grapefruit and lettuce salad; and Devil's food cake.

There is a secret about removing whole sections of grapefruit from the skin. Tear the peel off the whole fruit with the fingers, as you would peel an orange, leaving some of the white covering all over the surface. Then let the grapefruit stand until this white covering dries and hardens somewhat. This makes it easier to pull the covering away from the pulp inside. Now separate the fruit into sections and, with the point of a sharp knife, slit the skin of each section down the center seam and pull it back. Now pull the whole section away from the skin. The success of the salad lies partly in having the grapefruit served in whole pieces and this method, the Menu Specialist tells me, is the very easiest way to get them out without breaking.

Tomorrow: More About Kitchen Comfort.

